

ABOUT SLIM AND BERNAM.

PART II.

In the first part of this Paper I have endeavoured to give some idea of the south-eastern district of Pêrak as far as the river Songkei, being the most easterly affluent of the Pêrak. The next river met to the East after leaving the Songkei is the Trôla, which falls into the Slim, which again falls into the Bernam, the next rain-basin South of the Pêrak river.

This Sungei Trôla is a considerable stream, which only needs to have the snags removed to make it navigable for boats up to half a *kegan* ; at present the smallest canoe cannot get through it.

Where we crossed it, at a place called Kampong Trôla, there is a colony of trading Malays settled, which has been here for the last four or five years ; they came originally to collect gutta and other jungle produce, and liking the look of the place have settled permanently ; these men, like most other foreign Malays in the peninsula, come from the Dutch colonies, and whatever else may be said of the Dutch rule in Malay countries, it appears to make traders and colonists of the people under its influence.

After leaving the Trôla about two and a half miles, the path passes through a pass about 400 feet high ; in it I noticed a peculiar sort of friable soil, of a buff colour, which, when pressed in the hand, crumbled down into flakes about the tenth of an inch thick. The name of this pass is Gapis.

A few miles beyond Gapis the path passes some hot springs, the geological formation of which puzzled me a good deal, as in the immediate neighbourhood of the springs the rock was evidently stratified, although apparently metamorphosed to a great extent, and con-

torted in a most extraordinary way; and fifty yards away from the springs all round the ordinary granitic formation prevailed. From the cursory observations I was able to make, it appeared to me that these springs formed the apex of some irruptive force, although a stratified rock underlying the granite appeared strange. I am unable to give the temperature as I had no thermometer registering high enough, but the heat was too great to have the hand in the water; there was a decidedly sulphurous smell in the neighbourhood, and I also saw a good deal of a bright green filmy matter adhering to the stones in the water similar to what I have observed at the hot springs amongst the limestone hills in the Kinta valley, but whether it is of a vegetable or mineral origin I was unable to determine.

Immediately after leaving the hot springs, the road lay among a number of small hills, the offshoots apparently of higher hills to the North, and here, for the first time, Mr. SMITH appeared thoroughly satisfied with the soil, although to my uninitiated eye there was not so much difference between it and lots of other soil we had passed; I, however, bow to his opinion on the subject of soils, as I know nothing about them.

After leaving the low hills I have just spoken of, the path runs through a broad belt of gigantic bamboos, after which the river Slim is reached. Just opposite the mouth of a tributary of it called the Galetin, a prettier view than the one that here met our gaze I have not often seen, and it was one that I was not prepared to find; fruit trees and houses bore testimony to a considerable population and an old *kampung*.

Crossing to the left bank of the Slim, our route lay nearly due North for about three quarters of a mile, till we reached Kampong Chankat, where the Pěngûlu TOH SEMPUR lives.

Here I remained for a day transacting some business with the people. Immediately opposite the *kampung*, about a quarter of a mile from the river, there is an extensive hot spring, or rather I should say group of springs, hotter than any I have yet met with in Pěrak; they can be recognised from a distance by the clouds of steam rising over the trees, and standing on the edge a man can scarcely be seen on the opposite side through the vapour.

After a day's rest Mr. SMITH and I separated for a short time : he starting to visit a hill up the valley of the Galetin, while I went down the river to see the *kampongs* and the people, intending, if possible, to visit some deposits of coal, which are said to exist about here. The first part of my programme was most successful, as I saw a number of very flourishing *kampongs*, all, with one exception, on the East (left) bank of the river ; these *kampongs* are situated on spots of high ground surrounded by stretches of wet padi land irrigated by a number of small streams flowing from the hills to the East. The large majority of the inhabitants are foreign Malays, principally Mandêlings, and their style of cultivation is certainly superior to that of the Malays in other parts of Pêrak, for which they reap their reward in the crops they get. The average yield, they tell me, from the wet padi land is of 800 to 1,000 gantangs of padi to the orlong, this, be it remembered, from land cultivated year after year without manure.

The lowest *kampong* on the Slim is Kampong Pindras, and here I was to have got guides to take me to the coal deposits, but when I got there, the man, a *Sakei*, was away, and others who said they thought they knew the road, stated that it would take them two or three days to find it, so, as I had no time to spare, I gave up the hope of finding the coal, and contented myself with a specimen which I got from the Pëngûlu. This is, I think, unmistakably coal, of an inferior quality no doubt, but good coal is not often found on the surface. If the Sarawak coal mining proves a success, it might tempt some enterprising capitalist to commence operations here, the facilities for transport offered by a navigable river are not to be lost sight of.

The Slim, as far as Kwala Galetin, is navigable for boats of over a *koyan*. I saw one there when I passed that had come from the Kwala Bernam to buy rice, a decided sign of prosperity when the people grow more food than they consume. In no other part of south-eastern Pêrak is this the case ; it must, however, be borne in mind that tin-mining is the principal industry on the other rivers, and that no tin has been worked on the Slim since the disturbances consequent on the murder of Mr. BIRCH, not through the failure of the mines, but because the miners were obliged to leave at that time, as the blockade prevented their getting supplies brought up to them. When peace was restored, Raja ASAL, who was the leading

spirit of these miners, got certain concessions at Papan, on the West of the Kinta river, and all the miners followed him there, where, they say, the ore is more plentiful, but more difficult to work.

As I failed to reach the coal deposits, but was part of the way to the Bernam, I determined to visit that river, the southern boundary of Pêrak. before returning to the Ulu Slim. One day's march from Kampong Blit, where I spent the night, took me to Kampong Bernam, it was however a most fatiguing journey, although we went in the lightest marching order; the small forest leeches (*pachat*) were more numerous than I ever saw them before. On the way we crossed two considerable streams, and a number of small ones, tributaries of the Slim: the first, Sungei Bîl, was a mountain torrent full of rocks; the second was a navigable river, the Sungei Berong, on which a colony of foreign Malays have settled, and appear to be in a very thriving condition; where they are settled the country is flat, and they cultivate a good deal of wet padi.

After leaving the Berong we crossed the spurs of some high hills to the East before reaching the Bernam at Kampong Bernam. The distance from Kampong Chankat on the Slim to Kampong Bernam, I estimate at about twenty miles. I did not chain this distance, but have been able to plot it approximately by the time and compass bearings.

Kampong Bernam is a large village on the northern side of the river, said to contain about eighty families, nearly all foreign Malays, who came as traders and have settled permanently. The attraction which first brought them here was the tin-mining, which, as I have already mentioned, has ceased on the Pêrak side since Raja AsaL left. There are still extensive tin-mines being worked on the southern (the Sêlângor) side of the Bernam, but I was told there are fewer miners now than there used to be.

From Kampong Bernam there is a well used path leading to Pahang; the gradient is said to be easy most of the way, but there are two or three places where the path is impracticable for elephants, *i.e.*, tame ones; it is a curious fact, well authenticated, that wild elephants can pass places where tame ones cannot. Buffaloes are frequently brought by this pass from Pahang into Pêrak and

Selângor. I was told that it is about two days' journey from Kampong Bernam to the first Malay *kampong* in Pahang. A road through either this or some of the other passes into Pahang would bring a good deal of traffic over to the western side, as the transport by water from a navigable point on the Bernam or Slim is shorter and easier than by the Pahang river; moreover the ports on the western side of the peninsula are always open, whereas on the eastern side they are closed for six months of the year by the North-east monsoon.

I was told by the people both at the Slim and the Bernam that at present a steam launch can go up the Berlam to a place called Chankat Mëntri, to which point the river is tidal. The ordinary country boats can reach that point in three tides; from Chankat Mëntri to Kampong Bernam on the Bernam river, or the Kwala Galetin on the Slim, is about three or four days' poling. The freight at present charged from Kampong Bernam to the sea is \$1 per *bhara* for tin, which is not excessive.

From Kampong Bernam can be seen a hill to the North-east, which at this point is the much talked of back-bone range; the Bernam rises on the South of it, draining the south-western face, the Berong takes its rise on the North of this hill, draining the north-western face of it. The Sungei Berong falls into the Bernam, a short distance above the Kwala Slim.

On my return to Kampong Chankat I made the acquaintance of the Pëngûlu, who was absent when I first arrived; his name is Dâtoh SEMPUR; he is an old man, but full of energy, one of the finest specimens of Malay I have ever met. Unlike the generality of his countrymen, who have seldom or never been beyond their own immediate neighbourhood, he has wandered over the whole peninsula, from Siam to Johor, and has commemorated his visit to each country by marrying a wife there; he told me the names of his wives, but broke down at about nineteen when trying to count the number of his children; he speaks *Sakri* fluently, and possesses great influence with these people. I found him an invaluable guide and companion on my return journey. For any one wishing to explore the still unknown mountain regions of the peninsula, or to study the habits and customs of the *Sakeis*, a better guide could not be obtained than TOH SEMPUR.

I should mention here that, on my return to Kampong Chankat from the Bernam, I found Mr. SMITH, who had arrived before me. He had ascended the valley of the Galetin for some distance, and then climbed one of the hills to about a height of 3,000 feet by the aneroid. He was simply in raptures about the soil, which he compared to that of Ouva, the best coffee district in Ceylon. The numerous rocks and boulders he met also pleased him, as he, in common with all the coffee planters I have met, has an unaccountable, hankering after rocky land. He also got a few small specimens of plumbago, with which he was much pleased, as he said it is also found in the best land in Ceylon, although I confess I do not see what planters want with plumbago any more than rocks.

Another feature which both of us noticed, and which it appears augurs well for the soil, was the comparatively small size of the timber ; the best timber is said to grow on poor soil.

After stopping for a day at Kampong Chankat to enable TON SEMPUH to collect a number of *Sakeis*, we paid a visit to Batû Gaja, the boundary point in the pass between the Slim and Pahang. This was a two days' journey, one out and one back, and proved a most interesting trip. We started in the morning from Kampong Chankat, and keeping a northerly course along the left (East) bank of the Slim for about two miles, reached the confluence of the Sungai Brusê and the Slim. The Brusê is a considerable tributary of the Slim, flowing down the Batû Gaja pass in a direction about South-west ; up this valley our course lay. We kept some distance above the river on the North side of the valley, constantly crossing small streams flowing down the side of the hills into the river at the bottom. The ascent though steady was gradual the whole way, it was what I have heard very expressively described as "collar work" all through. We took the elephants a considerable distance and then only left them as we could get on more quickly on foot. The path was a good one and well worn, and we passed several parties of Malays coming and going from Pahang.

The name of this pass, Batû Gaja, is derived from a stone in it on the right hand side of the path, which bears a fanciful resemblance to an elephant kneeling down as they do to receive their loads ; the head is deficient and is said to have been removed to the Ulu Bil, a river that I have already mentioned, by some

mysterious agency in former times. This stone is addressed as the Toh Gaja, and every one passing is supposed to pluck a handful of grass or leaves, and striking Toh Gaja seven times on the breast with them, to ask him for fine weather for the journey; this ceremony we religiously performed, and having some people in the party familiar with elephants, we were enabled to choose food such as these animals like, and were rewarded by not getting any rain till we returned to Kampong Chankat. The idea about these leaves is that no matter how many are offered in a day the next day no trace of them remains.

The elevation at Batu Gaja, according to the aneroid, was 2,500 feet; this is not actually the highest point in the pass, which is about 200 yards further on, perhaps 50 feet higher. Immediately after crossing the pass a little trickling water is met, which, I was told, was the first beginning of Sungei Sëmbîlan, a tributary of the Pahang river.

Two hills rose on either side of the pass for at least another 1,000 feet: that to the North is called Gûnong Pëtri, the southern one I could not get a name for. No view was to be obtained from the pass, as everything was hidden by a dense growth of gigantic bamboos, which appeared to extend to the summits of both the hills North and South of us. These large bamboos appeared to thrive in most of the Slim and Songkei hills, and I have seen a good many of them up the Kinta valley. Different planters express different opinions of them; in Ceylon, I believe, bamboo land is discredited; in southern India it is thought the best; "doctors differ, &c." The state of the weather, the hour of the day, and many other causes appear to have a marked influence on the nature of the soil; whatever the cause, no two planters whom I met appear to agree; query, does any of them know anything about it?

In this pass I saw the footprints of wild elephants, where, I should have thought, few animals but a goat could have gone, most certainly no tame elephant could have been taken there.

The return journey from Batu Gaja was uninteresting, as we merely retraced our footsteps. When I reached Kampong Chankat Toh SEMPUN told me that at Batu Gaja we should be com-

paratively close to some gold and tin mines in Pahang, although when I asked him at that place he said they were still more than a day's journey distant; he explained himself by saying that these mines being in Pahang, beyond his jurisdiction, he was afraid that I would have wanted to go there, and had anything happened he would be blamed.

These gold mines at the Ulu Pahang are spoken of as being exceptionally rich. I heard stories which were quite incredible of the quantities of gold dust got in a short time. One fact is well known, that Pahang gold is of very fine quality, in this respect differing from Pêrak gold, which is very pale. A good deal of gold and ivory is said to pass westward from Pahang, and I met a trader at the Slim who made no secret that he had just returned from Pahang, where he had been negotiating for the purchase of tin to be taken down the Bernam river.

After returning from Batu Gaja a couple of days were spent in collecting coolies and making preparations for our journey back; these preparations consisted chiefly in buying rice, padi was procurable apparently in any reasonable quantity, but some delay occurred in pounding out the rice.

Sakeis are the coolies here, in fact they take the place of elephants further North as beasts of burthen. Physically they are a remarkably fine race, much fairer and more robust than the Kinta and Kampar *Sakeis*.

Raja BILA, a Mandêling man, and the head of the traders in the Kinta district, who accompanied me, was formerly engaged working tin here, and he informed me that his people had no difficulty in getting *Sakeis* to carry rice up to, or tin down from, the mines, which I subsequently ascertained were about fourteen or fifteen miles distant at an elevation of over 2,000 feet; the established rate was thirty cents per fifty catties up or down, consisting usually of a slab of tin down or ten gantangs of rice up, when Malays carried they were paid in coin, *Sakeis* usually took their pay in kind—cloth, tobacco, &c.

When we started for the journey back our party consisted of thirty-two all told, including some female *Sakeis*, who appeared as willing and able to carry a load as the males. The track took us

along the right (western) bank of the Slim ; for the first three miles we just skirted between the wet padi fields, and the foot of the hills ; after this we began to rise gradually along a ridge, our course continuing pretty nearly North ; after reaching an elevation of some 2,000 feet, we descended about 600 feet, and camped for the night on the bank of a tributary of the Slim called Sungei Kudin.

The following morning we crossed this stream on a *Sakei* bridge—a fallen tree—by no means pleasant work ; we were encouraged by being told that a man broke his leg crossing here some time ago with a slab of tin on his shoulder ; another 100 yards further on, the Slim itself had to be crossed in the same way. After this, ascending to an elevation of about 2,100 feet, we came on an extensive tableland drained by a number of little streams formerly used by the tin miners.

As we came along, a hill was pointed out to us some two or three miles to the East, which could not have been less than 4,000 or 5,000 feet high, called Gûnong Dandan, said to be at this point one of the joints in the back-bone range.

Some four or five miles further on, we again came on the Slim, which we had not seen for some time ; it was here reduced to very modest dimensions, it did not take us much more than ankle deep wading across it. The country about was comparatively flat, with hills a few miles off, apparently some thousands of feet higher than we were. I made the elevation at our camp 2,200 feet by the aneroid. Mr. SMITH was very much pleased with the soil, and some *Sakeis*, in whose clearing we encamped, gave us some roasted *ubi kayu*, which were remarkably good. *Sakeis* are the only people who know how to cook these roots ; they roast them in a joint of bamboo split longitudinally ; when done they come out as white and floury as the best Murphy I ever saw.

Up to this I did not notice much change in the vegetation from that seen in the plains ; there was rather an absence of large trees, but the bamboos were exceptionally fine, some as much as four or five feet between the joints and six or seven inches in diameter. Mr. SMITH pronounced favourably of the soil, and what appeared to me to be an immense advantage was that it would be possible to grow coffee here without being condemned to everlasting treadmill, climbing up and down hill.

After leaving the Slim we made a short day's march to the Sungei Kudin, a tributary of the Slim, on the bank of which we had encamped two days before. Here we must have been within a very short distance of the frontier, judging from the size of the stream; this, however, is an uncertain guide, as we were told that we should have a long day's march the following day without seeing water. This would be a fine country for road making, apparently very dry, with plenty of stone for metalling.

The following day, as we had been told, we saw no water, but the *Sakeis* were always able to get enough for drinking in the joints of the bamboos; from a single joint I have seen as much as half a pint taken. There is also a sort of large vine from which, when cut, the water flows in a stream. This day's march took us through some very pretty country if it were cleared, but at present there is no more to be seen at an elevation of 4,000 or 5,000 feet than there is in the plains, the jungle being so dense. We crossed the watershed of the Slim and the Songkei to-day; the elevation was about 4,000 feet. Here our troubles began. As soon as we left the Slim valley our *Sakeis* declared that they did not know the way and wanted to go back. By great difficulty I was able to persuade part of the gang to remain with us, and we were obliged to encamp for three days before Songkei *Sakeis* could be got to replace those who had left us. None of our Slim *Sakeis* had ever been beyond this before: so much for the supposed migratory habits of these people. Here I may remark, that any one wishing to explore these mountain regions must work out one valley at a time. The Malay headmen lower down can always provide guides familiar with their own valley, and in it their topographical information is to be relied upon; attempt to leave it, however, for the next valley, and you are at once brought to a dead lock. The *Sakeis* not infrequently are at feud with their neighbours on either side, they have also a very wholesome dread of a very ingenious sort of spring armed with a bamboo spike, which they are in the habit of setting in the paths for pigs and deer, and which would be pretty sure to be fatal to a man if it struck him.

After a weary delay of three days we at last got guides, and crossing the Songkei travelled round the southern face of a hill called Gûnong Sandor. We passed along the face of the hill at a general elevation of about 3,000 feet; we were a long way from the

top. Here we saw a peculiar feature of the soil, which is so porous that the streams running down the face of the hill all run underground; during a long day's march we did not see a drop of water although constantly crossing water courses in which we frequently heard the water running under our feet. In some of these water courses the bed of the stream was marked by a succession of holes, at irregular intervals, about six feet in diameter and nearly as much deep, where the underground streams had made caves and the superincumbent earth had fallen in.

We encamped on Gûnong Sandor for one night, near a *Sakei* clearing, and here we saw a very ingenious arrangement by which they got water; they got large bamboos which they split and removed the obstacles at the joints, they then shoved these shoots into the side of the hill in a nearly horizontal direction till they reached the water bearing strata when the water trickled from the end of the bamboo in abundance for drinking; bathing was a tedious operation.

After leaving Gûnong Sandor to our East we got into the valley of the Bîdor river, where we had more delay in getting fresh guides. I was particularly struck by the marked falling off of the *Sakeis* as we advanced West. To the East they are taller, more robust and fairer than the average Malay, but as we got West, towards the rivers Bîdor and Batang Padang, they degenerated very rapidly, becoming smaller and darker than the Malay. The idea conveyed to my mind from the appearance of the people in the different places was that the Slim *Sakeis* were a well-fed, healthy race, whereas the Bîdor and Batang Padang *Sakeis* had a miserable half-starved appearance.

By the time we got into the Bîdor valley and got guides, we found that, in consequence of the unavoidable delays and damage through rain, our supply of rice was nearly finished, and there was scarcely anything else left; the time I had originally proposed to be away had already been exceeded, and most of the party had had very nearly enough of camping out in the wet, and some of them showed unmistakable signs of breaking down; I therefore determined that the shortest road back was the best; in consequence of this we were unable to visit any of the hills at the sources of the Bîdor and Batang Padang, only skirting along the lower slopes of those hills at elevations of less than 1,000 feet. In the hills in

this country it is almost impossible to get a view, except now and then when the explorer comes on a *Sakei* clearing; all the other parts of the hills are so densely clothed in forest that forty or fifty yards is generally the range of view; from two or three clearings, however, I saw some very lofty hills about the source of the Batang Padang, apparently the loftiest of these is one called Gûnong Raja, said to be one of the vertebræ of the back-bone range. It appeared to be distant over twenty miles; and *Sakeis* said it would take three days to reach it, and another day to ascend. Where we passed the Bidor it was broken up into three streams, none of them of any great size, I therefore have come to the conclusion that the Bidor river does not drain any of the loftier hills in the interior; its drainage is confined to the smaller outlying spurs, and the rivers in this part of the country, which have their rise in the true watershed of the peninsula, are, beginning from the West, first the Kinta river, next the Kampar river, next the Batang Padang, next the Songkei; I do not speak of the Plus on the North-west, or the Slim and Bernam on the South-east, as they belong to different systems of drainage; the Plus to the Upper Pêrak drainage, the Slim to the Bernam drainage. Taking the four rivers mentioned above as the principal arteries of the Lower Pêrak drainage the next set of secondary streams are the Raya between the Kinta and the Kampar, the Dîpong and the Chenderiang between the Kampar and the Batang Padang, and the lastly the Bidor between the Batang Padang and the Songkei.

In the foregoing paper I have endeavoured to give a general idea of this interesting and little known section of the kingdom of Pêrak, containing large deposits of minerals, only needing intelligence and capital to work them to advantage, and also offering exceptional advantages in the way of transport, soil and salubrious climate to planters of coffee, tea, and other tropical produce.
